

SPRING FORWARD 2016: PLANNING A COMMUNICATION ALUMNI EVENT

by

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### Abstract

Spring Forward 2016 is the second annual Appalachian State Communication Department alumni networking event that took place on March 23, 2016. For my Honor's thesis, I worked alongside Dr. Janice Pope to plan this event from August 2015 until the event's occurrence in March 2016. We created and distributed surveys to students, faculty, and alumni asking for alumni references, event suggestions to improve upon last year's Spring Forward 2015, and panel topic suggestions. We also asked teachers if they would like a guest-speaker to teach one of their classes on the day of the event. We then contacted the recommended alumni and invited them to return to the Communication Department for the day to speak on communication industry-related panels as well as to guest-speak in individual communication classes. From there, we dealt with logistical details of the event. This involved coordinating with staff at The Lost Province restaurant to book the upstairs section of the restaurant for the evening reception, assessing alumni's skillsets and expertise to assign them to speak in individual classes and on communication industry-related question-and-answer panels, designing promotional materials such as flyers and invitations, and creating and maintaining a social media presence to advertise the upcoming event. Scheduling was the most time-consuming part of the planning process. This required reconciling alumni's differing schedules with panel session times and individual class times as well as finding classrooms available during these times to host the panel sessions. On the day of the event, I was responsible for distributing parking passes to alumni, helping alumni navigate campus and find the appropriate classrooms for their panel session or individual class, and taking attendance so that professors could award extra credit for students who attended. I also ensured that the event ran smoothly as a whole and helped to stimulate

conversation during lulls in the panel sessions. Overall, Spring Forward 2016 was a rewarding and educational experience that taught me practical event-planning and time-management skills. While both students, alumni, and faculty agreed that the event was a beneficial experience for all who participated, feedback shows that improvements can be made to next year's event by having moderators facilitate the panel sessions and by making the alumni more recognizable and approachable at the evening reception.

## SPRING FORWARD 2016: PLANNING A COMMUNICATION ALUMNI EVENT

Spring Forward 2016 is an annual alumni networking event of the Department of Communication at Appalachian State University. It took place on March 23, 2016, from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Students, faculty, and 26 alumni participated in this department-wide event. For my Honor's thesis project, I worked alongside Dr. Janice Pope to plan the Communication Department's second annual Spring Forward. This involved every aspect of planning the event. Some of my responsibilities included using Qualtrics Online Survey Software to create pre-event surveys for both alumni and students in an attempt to better design this year's event, promoting and raising awareness of the event using strategic communication tactics including social media and Adobe Suite to design flyers and other promotional material, requesting alumni contact information and inviting them to participate in Spring Forward, coordinating with vendors to book and plan the reception, and carrying out miscellaneous details for the event. I also attended Spring Forward and followed up with alumni after the event, sending them thank-you notes and gathering feedback from both them and students.

Spring Forward is an interactive event for which communication alumni return to campus to speak on communication industry-related panels throughout the day, as well as guest speak in individual classes. These panels on various topics regarding different industries within the communication field give students a chance to hear more about what they can do with their degree in an industry they wish to pursue. Alumni who work in specific industries sat on a question-and-answer panel for each session, described their experiences in the field, and answered students' questions in a conversational style that encouraged information exchange. The event culminated with a networking reception at

Lost Province restaurant for the alumni and graduating Communication seniors. This informal social time provided the opportunity for students and alumni to get to know each other, have deeper conversations, and network.

## **Goals**

As this was the second annual Spring Forward, our desire was to build on last year's event to improve it and create traditions for future years' Spring Forward events. We identified our main three stakeholders for the event as alumni, students, and faculty of Appalachian State University. Our initial research with students consisted of using Qualtrics Survey Software to send a survey to every declared communication major asking for feedback on last year's event as well as what they would like to get out of Spring Forward 2016 (see Appendix A). Likewise, we sent separate surveys to alumni asking for their interest in participating in the event and to faculty asking for panel suggestions for this year's event (see Appendices B and C for survey instruments).

I also interviewed Appalachian State Director of Alumni Affairs Patrick Setzer (personal conversation, March 3, 2016) to gather more information on the value and pertinence of alumni interaction. Setzer believes alumni have a critical role in university life, that they are positive ambassadors for the university in their own communities. He also noted that alumni often serve on leadership roles on advisory boards, councils, university committees, and other kinds of volunteer/nominated roles on behalf of the university. Furthermore, they encourage prospective students to think about Appalachian and thereby help with student recruitment. He honed in on three key areas where alumni can give back: time - through visiting campus and/or volunteering; talents - through providing services for the university; or treasures - by remembering Appalachian annually in a monetary gift, no

matter the amount. Our event focused on the time and talent pillars, asking alumni to take time out of their busy schedules and careers and give back by sharing their knowledge and expertise on their industry and on how they got to where they are today.

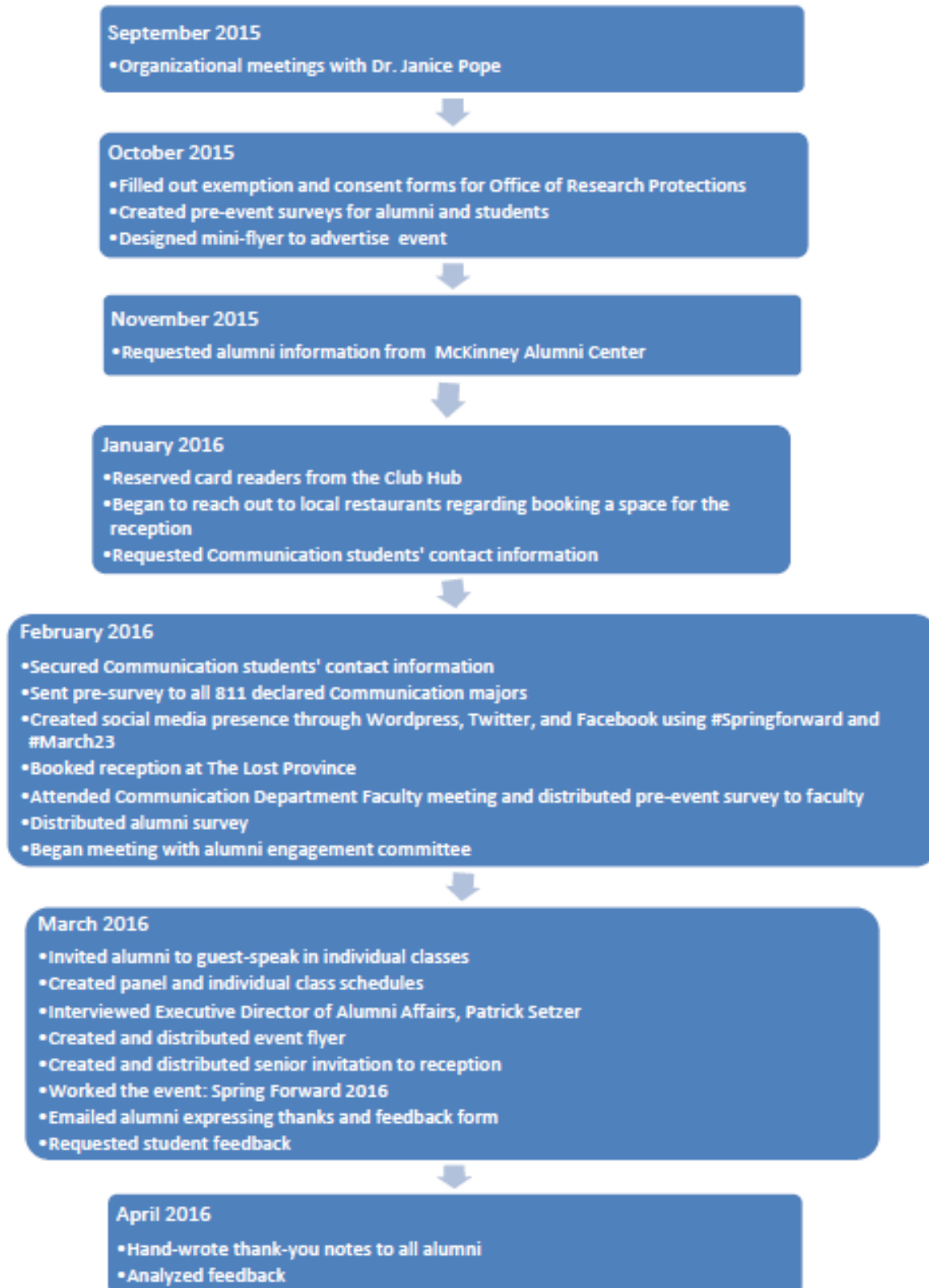
Setzer (personal conversation, March 3, 2016) also offered helpful tips on what makes a successful alumni event. A few of the to-be-expected tips included providing adequate, advanced notice; considering parking options in advance; including some sort of social gathering as part of the event; and following up with thank-you letters and feedback surveys. He also noted that students are best able to tell the story of what is happening in the Department of Communication today and that it is key for alumni to have a lot of interaction with current students. Predictably, alumni like to hear and see first-hand the impact they are having, and student interaction is an easy and feasible way to provide this.

With regard to Spring Forward specifically, Setzer (personal conversation, March 3, 2016) said this event is a good way to engage our alumni and provide them with the opportunity to meet our current students. It is also a good way of keeping alumni employment information up-to-date. He was personally able to catch up with alumni, collect business cards, and update the university's records when he attended the inaugural Spring Forward. This information is then available for all departments across the university for when they want to reach out to alumni. Other benefits of this event included a chance to engage alumni, the opportunity for alumni to be back on campus, providing the chance for departments to update alumni on what is happening in the department, creating solicitation opportunities, and giving alumni a chance to volunteer. He pointed out that solicitation requests should only be one facet of alumni interaction. Spring Forward provides an opportunity for alumni to come back to campus for a day and give back to the university in a

meaningful way without giving a monetary donation. This is important because, as Setzer pointed out, the university does not want alumni to think when they see something from the university, that it could only be a solicitation for giving. He also believed it to be an opportunity for the Department of Communication to showcase successful alumni to students and hopefully inspire them in their career path.

Based on this data, the goals of Spring Forward were to engage alumni by providing a meaningful opportunity for them to give back, provide networking opportunities, educate students on potential career paths in a practical way, and generate engaged student participation. From the beginning, our hope was to create an educational and fun event that students would want to be a part of.

## Timeline





Planning for Spring Forward 2016 started as early as August 2015 when Dr. Janice Pope and I first met to discuss my participation in planning this event. Fall 2015 semester consisted of doing much of the background work for this event. From September to December, I designed small-scale flyers for the event (see Appendix D), contacted Appalachian State's Technical Services regarding the best survey software to use, and created pre-event surveys for alumni, students, and faculty to fill out come the beginning of the year. In January, I started making reservations for the reception. I called The Local restaurant several times as we were hoping to schedule our reception there, but the lack of response and eagerness on their part led us to conduct business with The Lost Province restaurant instead. I also contacted the university's Club Hub to reserve student-identification card readers so that we could track student attendance for faculty who wanted to offer their students class credit for attending Spring Forward 2016.

February was a month for putting this preparation into action. During this time, I distributed student surveys via email to all declared Communication majors and later analyzed this data. I also reached out to Communication alumni to ask if they would be interested in participating in this event. If they said yes, I sent them a survey (see Appendix B) to determine where they would want to participate and what other alumni they would recommend me contacting. I also attended a Department of Communication faculty meeting to distribute surveys (see Appendix C) to faculty members in person. Among other things, we asked faculty if they would like to have an alumni guest-speak in their class. During this month, I also met with the department's Alumni Engagement Committee for the first time. This committee of five faculty members became a vital part of the success of this event.

The next step was to start promoting Spring Forward 2016 on social media. After creating a Facebook event for Spring Forward, I started tweeting and blogging about the upcoming event, using the hashtags #Springforward and #March23. This event was also announced in all of my classes, and we asked Communication Department professors to advertise the event in their classes as well. I also began to prepare questions for an interview with Director of Alumni Affairs, Patrick Setzer, which after many scheduling conflicts, finally happened at the beginning of March.

Beyond the interview, March brought lots of emailing and scheduling to my day-to-day life. It was then that alumni signed up for classes they wished to guest-speak in as well as requested parking passes. I finalized my flyers (see Appendices E and F), had them printed, and hung them throughout Walker Hall and Beasley Media Complex, the two buildings that house Communication classes. I also compiled and continuously updated a list of participating alumni (see Appendix G). Scheduling was perhaps the hardest aspect of my job (see Appendices H and I). I had to coordinate over 26 schedules; ensuring that alumni with similar expertise were all free to talk on a panel session at the same time. This also meant ensuring that none of these alum were already scheduled to speak to an individual class at this time. As the liaison of this event, I was in constant communication with alumni regarding event details and their rapidly changing schedules and frequently edited the panel schedules to accommodate for these changes. I also created and sent out an invitation (see Appendix J) to all graduating Communication Department seniors to join us for a reception at Lost Province restaurant after the panel sessions concluded that day.

The event took place on March 23, 2016. Pictures were taken throughout the day to serve as documentation (see Appendix K). One week later, I sent out a thank-you email with

a feedback form attached (see Appendix L), on which alumni could state what they did and did not like about this year's Spring Forward event. I also gathered feedback, both written and verbal, from classes where students were required to attend a panel session. A couple of days later, I sat down with the faculty alumni engagement committee to handwrite thank you notes to all of our alumni who participated in Spring Forward 2016.

### Summary

Panel Session	Time & Location	Panelists, #	Student Attendees, #
Arts, Culture, & Tourism	9 AM- Beasley 224	3	6
Recent Graduates/Graduate School	9 AM- Walker 103B	5	14
Sports	10 AM- Beasley 224	3	44
Religious Organizations	11 AM- Beasley 224	3	30
Corporate & Agency Communication	12 PM- Beasley 224	4	21
Broadcasting & Production	1 PM- Beasley 224	6	11
Recent Graduates/Graduate School 2	1 PM- Outside	4	7
Political Communications	2 PM- Beasley 224	5	23
Radio	2 PM- Walker 104	3	11
Sports 2	3 PM-Beasley 224	3	10
Nonprofit and Government	3 PM- Walker 103B	4	16
News & Journalism	4 PM- Beasley 224	5	17

The day consisted of 26 alumni participating in 12 panel sessions throughout the day on various topics listed below. Worth noting is that there were two panel sessions on both Recent Graduates/Graduate School and on Sports. This is a result of having several alumni volunteer with expertise in these fields, as well as having high student-interest in the Sports panel during last year's event.

The biggest student turnout was 44 students in the 10 a.m. Sports panel in Beasley 224. This was also the most popular session in last year's event, too. Participating alumni were Michael Trivette, Mike McMackin, and Carolyn Clark.

Thirty students attended the 11 a.m. Religious Organizations panel in Beasley 224. This was our second highest turnout. Participating alumni were Brennen Smith, Michael Talley, and Keith Pittman.

Ten students attended the 3 p.m. Sports panel in Beasley 224. Participating alumni were Graham Caddell, Marty Norris, and Gerald Witt. It is interesting to note that this panel did not have anywhere near the turnout of the other Sports panel.

Eleven of these alumni also guest-spoke in sixteen individual classes. In addition, several professors required their whole class attend a session in lieu of their regularly scheduled class. The day concluded with a well-attended reception at Lost Province restaurant for alumni and graduating Communication seniors. Not including the reception, 210 students attended panel sessions. Many more were involved through alumni guest-speaking in their classes as well.

It is also noteworthy that we had a wide range of alumni in both year-graduated and profession. Among others, we had with us Carolyn Clark, Senior Communications Manager at Yahoo!; Keith Pittman, radio personality and Program Director at Billy Graham's radio station, *The Light*; Kathryn Blanchard, President of Crown Communications PR Agency; and Lauren Osborne, Journalist at WYMT news. From journalists to producers to radio personalities to a College Pastor to a Communication and Marketing Manager at a local non-profit, we had a diverse and highly knowledgeable group of alumni who had graduated in Communication from 1984 to 2015.

## **Challenges**

Planning an event took a lot more time and effort than I had initially thought. It was a bit of a messy process with a lot of bumps along the way.

One of the first challenges we faced was getting access to the contact information of Communication Department alumni. We contacted the McKinney Alumni Office during Fall 2015 semester, filled out the required form, and asked them to send us a complete list of contact information for Communication alumni. However, when we looked at this information in the beginning of Spring 2016 semester, we found only a list of names and no contact information. Upon further conversations with that office, they told us we could not have access to this information. Because we needed to start recruiting right away, Dr. Janice Pope and I recruited ourselves. We started with those who participated last year, and then asked alumni and faculty members to suggest other Appalachian Communication alumni.

Another challenge in the beginning was booking a restaurant for the reception. Originally, we hoped to host the reception at The Local restaurant but after multiple phone calls, a visit, and an email before hearing a response, we turned to The Lost Province instead. They were quick to get back to us and very accommodating. I was surprised at The Local's disorganization; it cost them a big business deal.

A third challenge we faced was a lack of response to the surveys we sent out to students. Sent to 811 students, the surveys yielded only 38 completed responses, slightly less than a 5% response rate. This was after resending the survey link numerous times. One student also requested that I "Please stop emailing him." I assumed fellow students would have been more supportive of this event and my work toward my thesis, so this low response rate was a lesson for me in not making assumptions about stakeholders when planning an event.

Scheduling was also a huge challenge when planning this event. Several alumni had limited time commitments and could only participate in either the morning or the afternoon,

and fifteen of our alumni traveled from out of town to attend Spring Forward 2016. This made it difficult to find a time when all speakers for a given panel were available. When thrown into the mix that many alumni were guest speaking in individual classes throughout the day, reconciling all of these schedules became close to impossible. It came down to reconciling the schedules as best we could and then, when at a crossroads, deciding where a given alumni's expertise could best be used. Thankfully, alumni were all gracious and willing to participate as needed.

As great as the alumni were, working with that many people will always be tricky and some alumni communicated with me better than others. I have a newfound appreciation for those who respond just to let you know they have read their email. When planning an event of this magnitude, I was nervous to realize there were some alumni whom we had not heard from in over a month prior to the event. We sent them a confirmation email the week of the event, but sure enough, several alumni cancelled at the last minute. Five cancelled within a week of the event: the first was two days before, one the day before, and one the day of due to sickness. This left us trying to fill panel spots at the last minute. We ended up having a shortage of knowledgeable speakers on our busiest session, the first Sports panel.

Thankfully, Carolyn Clark stepped in last minute to help, but her career was not directly sports related. I learned it is helpful to overbook speakers for sessions, especially when "big-name" speakers with busy schedules have so much potential to be called away at the last minute, as happened with our two most well-known sports communicators.

Another difficulty was locating free classrooms to host our panel sessions. A couple of faculty members graciously offered their classrooms, but scheduling was definitely an issue and something that needs to be improved upon next year. We ended up accidentally

double-booking two classrooms with sessions. Thankfully, one of the teachers caught the mistake and notified us ahead of time, so we were able to find another room where her class could meet. The second mistake, however, was not caught until the day of, and one panel session ended up meeting outside the classroom on the lawn. The good news was that it was a beautiful, sunny day and this was our least attended session, with only seven students. To prevent this from being an issue again, we have already reserved rooms in the Student Union to host this event next year.

A final noteworthy challenge was that the Communication printer ran out of ink the week before the event while printing fliers I had designed to promote it. As a result, we could not finish printing the fliers, and the ones that were printed were streaked and looked sloppy. Needing them immediately, we were able to borrow another department's printer to finish the job.

## **Feedback**

Post-Spring Forward 2016, we received a lot of feedback, both verbal and written. Consistent positive feedback was that Spring Forward 2016 was a great event. Students were grateful to have a networking opportunity like this within their department, seeing it as an event comparable to those that other departments throughout the University already have. They were also thankful for the networking opportunities as a whole. Likewise, alumni loved the chance to be back on campus, especially to have such meaningful interactions with engaged students, and with one another. For them, it really is all about the students and the ability to help them in any way possible. A key word in alumni feedback was “interactions.” Whether it be guest-speaking to an individual class or on a panel, alumni were all about interacting with engaged students. A couple of alumni also mentioned that they thought their

time was put to better use during this year's Spring Forward than at last year's event and that speaking to individual classes was a great addition to this event. Alum Gerald Witt wrote, "Compared to last year, I felt like my time was used well. I am there for a day and I appreciate being able to speak to a class, talk in sessions and participate in discussion. My hope is that the students got something out of it" (survey response, April 5, 2016). Similarly, alum Mike McMackin wrote, "I liked speaking with the classes. That was a nice addition. Also makes better use of our time to get us in front of more students instead of just on the panels" (survey response, March 31, 2016).

Alumni also enjoyed the reception at the end of the day at The Lost Province. A couple of alumni also mentioned that they enjoyed the opportunity to network with other Appalachian alumni and to build their own social network, as well as the opportunity to hear the perspectives of and learn from fellow alumni. Alum Keith Pittman wrote, "I enjoyed the panel discussions because they...gave me a chance to get perspectives on the same questions from fellow panelists who may not see things every day from the same perspective as me. So it was mutually beneficial to both the students and to me professionally to get the diverse perspectives" (survey response, March 30, 2016). Likewise, Alumna Ellen Gwin Burnette wrote, "I really enjoy meeting other alumni and making connections, beneficial to my own career" (survey response, March 31, 2016).

For some of the more recent graduates, this event served as a sort of self-assessment, a chance for them to reflect on how far they have personally come since their graduation. Alumna Nina Mastandrea wrote, "Even though I only graduated in December, I have learned so much being in the industry and I love to be able to share that with students" (survey response, March 30, 2016). Burnette also wrote, "Happy to share things I have learned and



realize how far I have come and how valuable my education was through the communications dept” (survey response, March 31, 2016).

As for constructive criticism, there were two things I heard repeatedly. The first was that we need to have a moderator for the panels to keep conversation going. Alumni and students both agreed that the conversation during the panels became stagnant at times and that it would have been helpful to have a moderator. Alumna Carolyn Clark wrote, “I think there should be moderators for the panels to keep them flowing. To spark conversation. I also think it would be helpful to ask for questions in advance from students for each panel, this would help to dig into the important questions right from the get go” (survey response, March 30, 2016). Likewise, a student wrote, “The only (thing) I would have changed about this session was it was very unstructured. No one on the panel really knew what to talk about and the questions got very repetitive” (survey response, March 30, 2016). Other suggestions included knowing more about both the alumni and students ahead of the event, as well as having some prepared questions for each panel session.

In our post-event meeting, the Alumni Engagement Committee decided that next year we could have students and/or alumni moderate each of the panels as a way of increasing engagement while simultaneously helping the conversation to flow better. We also want to brief the alumni on the general topic they are speaking on before the panel as a means of keeping the conversation more focused. We decided that asking faculty to moderate the sessions might lessen their impact, since students “hear” messages from alumni differently than when faculty deliver those same messages.

The second main criticism was regarding the networking reception at Lost Province restaurant. Although several alumni mentioned how much they enjoyed it, many students felt that it could have been better. For instance, one student wrote regarding the event:

As for the event in itself, I just wish the networking experience at the end had gone a little differently. While I think the idea behind it was great, there was not a whole lot of alumni there and not a single one from the forum I attended. Therefore, networking was a little difficult because I had nothing to start a base on my conversation with an alumni and honestly did not even (k)now who most of the alumni in the room were.

(survey response, March 30, 2016)

As evidenced, many were also unsure of who the alumni were, especially since many were recent graduates who blended in visually with the students. Students also mentioned that they were afraid to approach alumni and felt many alumni were just talking among themselves.

To combat this problem for next year, we have developed a two-fold solution. The first is to make alumni wear name tags. While we provided name tags for them this year, most opted out of wearing them, making it harder to identify alumni. Next year, we will strongly suggest alumni wear them. The second solution is one that came from students themselves. They asked if there could be a “speed-dating” type activity at the reception where students could rotate in groups between alumni, getting a chance to talk and network with them in a more organized setting ahead of the more informal part of the reception. This would give students the chance to meet alumni and strike up a conversation so that when the casual reception happens, students will know who the alumni are and have something to talk

about with them. We also will consider holding the reception earlier in the day so that more alumni can attend, as well as holding the reception in the student union.

These were the two most common criticisms that should be addressed for next year. Other thoughts and suggestions, however, included making the panel sessions longer, adding a panel session on entrepreneurship, filming some of the panel sessions so that distance education students can participate in the event, and allowing alum in the production, broadcasting, and radio industries to chat on WASU, the campus radio station.

### **Personal Reflection**

Planning Spring Forward 2016 was simultaneously one of the most exhausting and educational undertakings I have attempted. I learned more about event planning, time management, and even myself than I expected, and when the event finally came to a close at 9 p.m. that night, I was able to see the fruit of all my labor and realized that I had blessed more than just myself. Although the lessons learned were many, I will discuss what I feel are the most important lessons.

Events are messy and unpredictable. No matter how much I would have liked to, I could not possibly have prepared for everything that did not go according to plan throughout this event. Some things were simply out of my control. For instance, five alumni dropped out of the event within a week of its occurring. One of those alumni dropped out two days before and another, the day before, and a third, the day of. The printer ran out of ink when we went to print the flyers I had worked so hard to create. A teacher emailed me a couple of days before the event saying that we had booked one of our panel sessions in her classroom, and she needed a place to host her exam review. One panel had to meet outside because another class was using their scheduled classroom. These are all unexpected problems that I

would have rather avoided. And while some of these problems could have been prevented with extra planning, many were out of my control. If I were to repeat this event or plan a similar one in the future, I would definitely pay more attention to certain areas. Experience has taught me what to be wary of and what often falls through the cracks in event planning, such as double-checking scheduling details, supply lists, and the duration of event programs performed by third parties when creating your event itinerary. But another thing that planning Spring Forward 2016 taught me is that there are always bumps in the road; they are inevitable and it is okay. Not everything is in my control so I must focus on what I can control and have grace with myself and with others while simultaneously making the needed changes both in the moment and in the future. Being flexible is key.

REST. I cannot stress this enough. I learned how critical it is to take time for myself, have breaks when I am not working (or thinking about work), and to be KIND to myself. Planning Spring Forward 2016 often threatened to be all-consuming of both my time and energy. This is why it was so important that I set aside time for my own health: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, etc. Although it may be counterintuitive, when I was the most stressed out and felt like I was in over my head, I would take a break and treat myself to a lunch out, or the like. We live in a world that is so focused on productivity and “progress” that often, taking adequate care of ourselves falls to the wayside. This actually makes us less productive. According to recent research, “aspects of work that are too demanding (e.g., work overload) may lead to constant overtaxing, resulting in diminished energy and time for nonwork activities, and in the long term, to chronic health problems” (Demerouti, Peeters, & van der Heijden, 2012). I had to learn not to feel guilty about setting work boundaries and for taking needed breaks. My health had to be made a priority.

To make rest a priority, I had to consciously consider my work-life balance, the next key takeaway. Throughout college, I have had professors lecture and warn of the culture created by the wide acceptance of communication technology, of how it creates 24/7 work and makes it difficult to separate work life from home life. According to Practitioners' work-life conflict: A PRSA survey, "Work-life balance for public relations professionals has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, in today's 24/7 work environment" (Shen, Jiang, Jin, & Sha, 2015). That being said, it is one thing to hear this and quite another to experience it. When planning Spring Forward 2016, I received emails around-the-clock, whether it be late at night or first thing in the morning. With so many people to coordinate, there was always a student, faculty member, or alumni who had a question or whom I needed to ask for a favor. And this being an event of such magnitude to the life of my academic department, there was always more work to be done. I found it hard to complete tasks for any other class because as soon as I sat down to work on it, I would be interrupted with another question via email. Often, I would not know the answer and would have to email someone else to get it, making the process that much more drawn out. As the event approached, I found I was spending well over an hour each day responding to emails. Thankfully, this part of the process only lasted for 3-4 weeks. By the end of it, I recognized that I would need to establish work versus home-life boundaries if I were to continue this kind of work. I discovered how key it was for the sake of my own health as well as for the sake of my productivity on other tasks to have time specifically for work and time where work was forbidden.

Spring Forward 2016 was a success thanks to a number of alumni, faculty, and students who offered assistance, gave their time and support, and attended the event fully

engaged. All the relevant stakeholders came away with positive experiences overall, based on feedback. Meanwhile, it was both an educational and rewarding experience that left me with relevant skills to take into the workforce.

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Appendix A  
Student Survey\*

Spring Forward 2016 is an event that brings together current students and alumni from the Department of Communication at Appalachian State. Alumni present panel sessions on various topics. Past topics have included the following:

Arts, Culture, & Tourism  
Religious Organizations  
Sports  
Nonprofit & Government  
Agencies & Private Sector  
Politics  
Graduate School

This year's session is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23rd. A networking reception will also be held for graduating seniors and alumni on Wednesday night at 5pm. To best meet your expectations for this event, we request that you answer a few questions. Your responses will be kept confidential. We will use this information for planning purposes only.

Q1 Did you attend any of the Spring Forward 2015 sessions (last year)?

Yes

No

Q2 If yes, what did you find most helpful/enjoyable about these panel sessions?

Q3 If answered 'yes' to Q1, which session(s) did you attend?



- ☐ Arts, Culture, & Tourism
- ☐ Religious Organizations
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Nonprofit & Government
- ☐ Agencies & Private Sector
- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Graduate School
- ☐ I don't remember

Q4 Thinking ahead to this year's Spring Forward 2016 alumni networking event, what professional questions would you like alumni to address?

Q5 What are the biggest questions/concerns/unclear areas you have regarding professional life/life after college?

Q6 What would make you most want to come to Spring Forward 2016?

Q7 In this year's Spring Forward 2016 alumni networking event, which of the following sessions would you be the most interested in attending (pick top 3):

- ☐ Arts, Culture, & Tourism
- ☐ Religious Organizations
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Nonprofit & Government
- ☐ Agencies & Private Sector

☐ Politics

☐ Graduate School

☐ Other suggested sessions? \_\_\_\_\_

Q8 What year are you in your academic career?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Q9 What is your Communication major?

Advertising

Communication Studies

Electronic Media/broadcasting

Journalism

Public Relations

I'm a Communication minor, but would be interested in attending.

Not applicable

\*Formatting changed when exported from Qualtrics

Appendix B  
Alumni Survey\*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Spring Forward 2016, the Department of Communication alumni-student networking event, on Wednesday, March 23rd. We will schedule alumni panel discussions throughout the day, and provide you with the opportunity to speak to individual classes as well, if you are willing. A networking reception will also be held for graduating seniors and alumni on Wednesday night at 5.

Q1 Please fill in the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 What year did you graduate from Appalachian?

Q3 What was your major?

- Advertising
- Communication Studies
- Electronic Media/Broadcasting
- Journalism
- Public Relations
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 Where are you currently working? Please include the company name, your job title, and a short description of what the job entails.

Q5 Which sessions would you be most interested in participating in this year? Mark all that apply.

☐ Arts, Culture, & Tourism

☐ Religious Organizations

☐ Sports

☐ Nonprofit & Government

☐ Agencies & Private Sector

☐ Politics

☐ Graduate School

☐ Other suggested sessions? \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 Are you willing to participate in a "recent grad" panel that discusses the transition from school to the work world?

Yes

No

Q7 Are you interested in addressing an individual class?

Yes

No

Q8 What is the best time of day for your participation?

Morning

Afternoon

It doesn't matter

Q9 Will you be able to attend our student-alumni networking reception at 5 pm on Wednesday?

Yes

No

Q10 Is there another Appalachian State communication alumni you recommend we contact to participate in Spring Forward 2016?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No

Q11 If yes, what is this alumni's email?

Q12 Do you have any special needs for us to consider?

\*Formatting changed when exported from Qualtrics

Appendix C  
Faculty Survey\*

We are so excited to announce our 2nd annual Spring Forward 2016 networking event, scheduled for Wednesday, March 23. Spring Forward 2016 is an event that brings together current students and alumni from the Department of Communication at Appalachian State.

Alumni present panel sessions on various topics. Past topics have included the following:

Arts, Culture, & Tourism  
Religious Organizations  
Sports  
Nonprofit & Government  
Agencies & Private Sector  
Politics  
Graduate School

Faculty support was key to making last year's Spring Forward 2015 such a success. To make this year's Spring Forward 2016 an even greater success, we would appreciate if you would take a few minutes to provide us with feedback via this short survey. We will use this information for planning purposes only.

Q1 Please fill in the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

There are two ways you can have your students participate in this event: The first is for those who teach Wednesday classes to have an alum come speak to their intact class. The second is by having students attend topical sessions.

Q2 Do you teach a Wednesday class that you would be interested in having alumni come and speak to?

Yes

No

Q3 If yes, what is the time and classroom number of this class?

Q4 What topic(s) would you like alumni to speak on? (Pick top 3):

\_\_\_ Arts, Culture, & Tourism

\_\_\_ Religious Organizations

\_\_\_ Sports

\_\_\_ Nonprofit & Government

\_\_\_ Agencies & Private Sector

\_\_\_ Politics

\_\_\_ Graduate School

\_\_\_ Other suggested sessions? \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 As stated earlier, your students can also participate by attending topical sessions. Will you require your students to attend sessions at Spring Forward 2016?

Yes

No

Haven't Decided

Q6 If you require students to attend, would you like to offer extra credit to them? We plan to have App card readers to monitor attendance, so we will be able to work with you on this.

Yes

No

Haven't Decided

Q7 Is there another Appalachian State communication alumni you recommend we contact to participate in Spring Forward 2016?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No

Q8 What is this alumni's email address?

Q9 Anything else you'd like to suggest?

\*Formatting changed when exported from Qualtrics



Appendix D

Mini-Flyer



# Spring Forward

A time to reflect and connect



Inviting all Communication students to join us for professional development sessions and an opportunity to network with ASU Communication alumni.

March 23, 2016  
Walker Hall and Beasley Complex

## Appendix E

## Flyer

 <h1>Spring Forward</h1> <p>A time to reflect and connect</p> 	
<p><b>March 23, 2016</b> <b>9am - 5pm</b></p>	
<p>Spring Forward is a networking event that brings together current students and alumni from the Department of Communication at Appalachian State.</p>	<p><b>Communication Sessions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arts, Culture, &amp; Tourism</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recent Grad/Graduate School</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Religious Organizations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Corporate &amp; Agency</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Broadcasting &amp; Production</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Political Communication</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit &amp; Government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> News &amp; Journalism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Schedule</b></p> <p><b>8:00 am - 9:00 am</b> Faculty &amp; Alumni Breakfast</p> <p><b>9:00 am - 5:00 pm</b> Communication Sessions hosted by ASU Alumni</p> <p><b>5:00 pm - 6:30 pm</b> Alumni &amp; Graduating Seniors Dinner at Lost Province</p>	
 <p>Hosted by ASU's Department of Communication</p>	

## Appendix F

## Flyer with Panel Times

# Spring Forward

A time to reflect and connect

>>

**March 23, 2016**

**9am - 5pm**

Spring Forward is a networking event that brings together current students and alumni from the Department of Communication at Appalachian State.



Schedule	
<b>8:00 am- 9:00am</b> Alumni & Faculty Breakfast	<b>1:00 pm- Walker 214</b> Recent Grad/Graduate School
<b>9:00 am- Beasley 224</b> Arts, Culture, & Tourism	<b>2:00 pm- Beasley 224</b> Political Communication
<b>9:00 am- Walker 103B</b> Recent Grad/Graduate School	<b>2:00 pm- Walker 104</b> Radio
<b>10:00 am- Beasley 224</b> Sports	<b>3:00 pm- Beasley 224</b> Sports
<b>11:00 am- Beasley 224</b> Religious Organizations	<b>3:00 pm- Walker 103B</b> Nonprofit & Government
<b>12:00 pm- Beasley 224</b> Corporate & Agency Communication	<b>4:00 pm- Beasley 224</b> News & Journalism
<b>1:00 pm- Beasley 224</b> Broadcasting & Production	<b>5:00 pm -6:30 pm</b> Alumni & Graduating Seniors Dinner at Lost Province

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Hosted by ASU's Department of Communication

## Appendix G

## Alumni List

Name	Job Title	Parking Pass?
Austin Windell	WCCB production assistant	Y
Stephanie Spaulding	Public Relations Account Coordinator at Command Partners	Y
Katherine Morris	Market Research Analyst at Addison Whitney	Y
Sarah Kasper	temp work	Y
Gerald Witt	journalist	Y
Kathryn Blanchard	president, Crown Communication	
Dave Blanks	Production Assistant Audio Engineer	N
Ellen Gwin Burnette	professional photographer	Y
Brennen Smith	Communication & Marketing Manager at His High Places; Web Designer and Copywriter for Laz	Y
Michael Talley	College Pastor at Alliance Bible fellowship Church	N
Lauren Osborne	wymt journalist	Y
Jackson Helms	photographer at Live 5 News	
Krista Loomer	getting mba	
Nina Mastandrea	Politics Reporter-Statesville Record & Landmark	Y
Anna Oakes	Editor for Watauga Democrat	
Andrea Gimlin	Major Gifts Officer- Appstate	N
Carolyn Clark	Sr. Communications Manager, Yahoo	Y
Keith Pittman	106.9-Billy Graham's station-radio personality and program director, coaches debate	Y
Graham Caddell	Owner of Caddell Broadcasting radio Station in W. Jefferson- social media	Y
Marty Norris	with Graham above, put on same panels/classes	N
Garrett Ford	Motion Media Specialist	?
Michael Trivette	owns a consulting firm for students- transition to college	Y
Mike McMackin	pet store	Y
Ethan Dodson	Director of Leadership Gifts and Board Development at Appalachian State University	N
Josh Elliot	W2W- International Operations Director	

## Appendix H

### Individual Class Schedule

Persuasion: 8 a.m.	Carolyn Clark	
Introduction to Journalism: 9 a.m.	Keith Pittman	Mike McMackin
Crisis Communication: 9 a.m.	Carolyn Clark	
Media Law: 10 a.m.	Lauren Osborne	
Introduction to Journalism: 10 a.m.	Nina Mastandrea	
PR Principles: 10 a.m.	Stephanie Spaulding	Sarah Kasper
Media Law: 11 a.m.	Lauren Osborne	
PR Principles: 11 a.m.	Stephanie Spaulding	Sarah Kasper
Social Media Strategies: 11 a.m.	Carolyn Clark	
Speech Writing 12:30 PM	Lauren Osborne	
Introduction to Journalism: 1 p.m.	Nina Mastandrea	Gerald Witt
Organizational Communication: 1 p.m.	Brennen Smith	
Social Media Strategies: 2 p.m.	Brennen Smith	
Interpersonal Communication: 3:15 p.m.	Michael Talley	Mike McMackin
Internet Communication: 3:30 p.m.	Katherine Morris	
Feature Writing: 3:30 p.m.	Lauren Osborne	

## Appendix I

### Panel Schedule

<b>9:00:00 AM- Beasley 224</b> <b>Arts, Cult, &amp; Tour</b> Sarah Kasper Ellen Gwin Burnette Jeff Merritt Garrett Ford	<b>9:00:00 AM- Walker 103B</b> <b>Recent Grad/Grad School</b> Brennen Smith Michael Talley Stephanie Spaulding Michael Trivette Ethan Dodson	<b>10:00:00 AM- Beasley 224</b> <b>Sports</b> Carolyn Clark Michael Trivette Mike McMackin	<b>11:00:00 AM- Beasley 224</b> <b>Religious Organizations</b> Brennen Smith Michael Talley Keith Pittman
<b>12:00:00 PM- Beasley 224</b> <b>Corporate and Agency Comm</b> Kathryn Blanchard Katherine Morris Stephanie Spaulding Carolyn Clark	<b>1:00:00 PM-Beasley 224</b> <b>Broadcasting &amp; Production</b> Dave Blanks Graham Caddell/Marty Norris Garrett Ford Austin Windell Jackson Helms	<b>1:00:00 PM- Walker 214</b> <b>Recent Grad/Grad School 2</b> Sarah Kasper Katherine Morris Krista Loomer Josh Elliot	<b>2:00:00 PM- Beasley 224</b> <b>Political Communication</b> Jackson Helms Gerald Witt Nina Mastandrea Lauren Osborne Michael Trivette
<b>2 PM- Walker 104</b> <b>Radio</b> Keith Pittman Graham Caddell/Marty Norris	<b>3:00:00 PM-Beasley 224</b> <b>Sports 2</b> Graham Caddell/Marty Norris Gerald Witt	<b>3 PM- Walker 103B</b> <b>Nonprof &amp; Gov't</b> Brennen Smith Keith Pittman Nina Mastandrea Kathryn Blanchard	<b>4:00:00 PM- Beasley 224</b> <b>News/Journalism</b> Nina Mastandrea Anna Oakes Keith Pittman Gerald Witt Jackson Helms

## Appendix J

## Reception Invitation to Seniors

***You're Invited!***

**Who:** All graduating Communication seniors

**What:** Networking Reception

**When:** 5 - 6:30pm, March 23, 2016

**Where:** Lost Province, Boone, NC

**Why:** An opportunity to network with other Appalachian Communication alumni while enjoying free food

***Please dress business casual.***



## Appendix K

### Pictures\*



















\*Pictures courtesy of Laura Brittain

Appendix L  
Alumni Feedback Form

**Spring Forward 2016 Feedback Form**

*Please let us know the following:*

Name:

What did you particularly enjoy about participating in this event?

What suggestions do you have for next year's event?

Would you like to be a part of Spring Forward again next year?